

# MOLD

## Frequently Asked Questions

*Prompt Clean-Up Helps  
to Control Health Problems*

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## Control Mold Growth

A wet or flooded building or house encourages the growth of mold. People who are exposed to mold may develop certain health problems. It is very important to prevent the growth of mold by cleaning and drying water-damaged areas and items within 24-48 hours.

Inhaling or touching mold or mold spores can trigger allergic reactions, asthma, skin rash and other problems. Frequent or prolonged exposure to mold or mold spores may cause a life-long allergy to mold.

Q: How do I get rid of mold?

A: It is impossible to remove all molds and mold spores indoors; some mold spores naturally float through the air and are found in house dust. The mold spores will not grow if moisture is not present. Therefore, if there is mold growth in your home, you must clean up the mold and fix the water problem. If you clean up the mold but you do not fix the water problem, then it is very likely that the mold problem will come back.

Q: Who should do the cleanup?

A: Who should do the cleanup depends on a number of factors. One consideration is the size of the mold problem. If the moldy area is less than a roughly 3 feet by 3 feet patch, in most cases, you can handle the job yourself, following the tips and techniques in the section below. However, if there has been a lot of water damage, and/or the mold, growth covers more than a 10 square feet; consult the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) guide: [Mold Remediation in Schools and Commercial Buildings](http://www.epa.gov/iaq/molds/mold_remediation.html). Although focused on schools and commercial buildings, this information is applicable to homes and other buildings. It is available free of charge by calling the EPA Indoor Air Quality Information Clearinghouse at 800-438-4318, or on the Internet at: [http://www.epa.gov/iaq/molds/mold\\_remediation.html](http://www.epa.gov/iaq/molds/mold_remediation.html).

If you choose to hire a contractor or professional service provider to do the cleanup, make sure the contractor or professional service provider has experience cleaning up mold. Check references and ask the contractor if they follow EPA guidelines. In particular, we recommend that they use Certified Mold Remediators (CMR)'s who follow IICRC (Institute of Inspection, Cleaning and Restoration Certification) S520 Guidelines. If the water and/or mold problem was caused by sewage or other contaminated water, then call in a professional who has experience cleaning and fixing buildings damaged by contaminated water. If you have health concerns, please consult a health professional before starting the cleanup.

Q: Should I use a disinfectant as part of my cleanup?

A: Biocides are substances that can destroy living organisms. The EPA does not recommend the use of a biocide (chlorine bleach, for example) as a routine practice during mold cleanup. There may be instances, however, when professional judgment may indicate its use (for example, when immune-compromised individuals are present). In most cases, it is not possible or desirable to sterilize the area; a background level of mold spores will remain -- these spores will not grow if the moisture problem has been resolved. If you choose to use disinfectants or biocides, wear protective equipment listed below and always ventilate the area and exhaust the air to the outdoors. Never mix chlorine bleach solution with other cleaning solutions or detergents that contain ammonia because toxic fumes can be produced.

Tips and Techniques:

- Fix plumbing leaks and other water problems as soon as possible. Dry all items completely.
- Scrub mold off hard surfaces with non-ammonia soap or detergent and water, and dry completely
- Absorbent or porous materials such as ceiling tiles and carpet may have to be thrown away if they become moldy. Mold can grow on almost any surface and fill the empty spaces and crevices of porous materials, so the mold may be difficult or impossible to remove completely.
- It is important to limit your exposure to mold and mold spores. If you have lung problems, a respirator may not be safe for you, (nor would doing the cleanup yourself for that matter). Wear an N95 respirator, available at many hardware stores and from companies that advertise on the Internet. Follow the instructions for use of the mask carefully. Wear long gloves that are made of natural rubber, neoprene, nitrile, polyurethane or PVC. Gloves should extend to the middle of the forearm. Wear goggles that do not have ventilation holes. Avoid getting mold or mold spores in your eyes.
- Although not generally recommended for mold cleanup, if you choose to use a biocide or disinfectant, a disinfectant solution can be made by mixing one part chlorine bleach to four parts water. Remember to wear the N95 respirator, gloves and goggles when applying the bleach solution. Do not mix with other cleaning solutions and ventilate the area completely! It is best to not add too much additional water to the contaminated area, so work carefully. Allow the disinfectant solution to dry naturally for a six to eight hour time period. It should not be removed or dried quickly because extended contact time is important to kill the mold.

For more information about mold cleanup, the EPA's guide [A Brief Guide to Mold, Moisture and Your Home](#) is available on the Internet at: